



Attorney General Jon Bruning

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Attorney General Bruning Unveils 2009 Crime-Fighting Package

**Note: Sound bites will be available shortly at: <http://www.ago.ne.gov>**

(Lincoln, Neb.) Attorney General Jon Bruning today unveiled his crime-fighting package for the upcoming 2009 legislative session.

Bruning's 2009 legislative package includes four bills. The first seeks to protect Nebraska children from Internet predators. The second bill will educate tweens and teens about dating violence to stop abusive relationships before they start. The third will help address gang violence and crime. And, the fourth works to fight white-collar crime and protect Nebraska consumers.

**Child Protection Bill** – This bill protects Nebraska kids from Internet sex predators by making it illegal for registered sex offenders to use social-networking sites.

“Teens aren’t the only ones using social-networking sites. Predators use them to find their next child victim,” said Bruning. “Registered sex offenders have no business being on sites like MySpace and Facebook.”

The bill also requires that offenders share their online aliases and profiles on social-networking sites as a condition of sex offender registration.

“Social-networking sites provide an environment where people don’t have to reveal their true identities,” said Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh of Omaha who’s carrying the legislation. “Sex offenders use that to their advantage and pose as teens to meet other teens. This bill will help keep predators away from our children.”

**Lindsay Ann Burke Act** – This bill is based on Rhode Island’s Lindsay Ann Burke Act and requires schools to incorporate dating violence education for students in 6-12 grades.

Sen. Gwen Howard of Omaha, introducer of the legislation, said, “I’m excited about working with the Attorney General’s Office to reduce teen dating violence. Breaking the cycle early can eliminate a lifetime of poor outcomes. I have always been a firm believer that education is critical to effective prevention and that, as the saying goes, ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.’ ”

**Gang Restriction Act** – This bill addresses gang violence, crime and drugs in Nebraska communities by creating the offenses of unlawful gang recruitment, unauthorized application of graffiti and drive by shooting, plus increases the penalties for weapons possession.

Sen. Mike Friend of Omaha who's sponsoring the bill said, "Gang violence is a problem in many areas of the state and it's hitting many Nebraskans close to home. This is a measure that provides real statutory tools for law enforcement and prosecutors who must deal with these issues."

**Public Protection Act** - This bill makes using money gained from illegal racketeering activities to operate legal or illegal enterprises against the law. Nebraska is part of a small minority of states that doesn't have some form of a racketeering or RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) statute.

Another portion of the bill would allow the financial losses of multiple victims to be added together to increase the level of charges and penalties. The recent gas station investigations demonstrate why "aggregation" of charges is needed.

In April, the Attorney General's Office launched an investigation into gas blends after the Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture's Division of Weights and Measures informed the office that stations were selling ethanol-blend gasoline at an unleaded price.

The investigation found a gas station owner was selling ethanol-blend gasoline to customers at the higher unleaded price. The investigation also found that the general manager of a Sapp Bros distribution center actively promoted the idea.

Both men deceived customers for over a year... taking a little bit of money from a lot of unsuspecting people. Current state law won't allow the losses of multiple victims to be added together the owner and general manager can't be charged with felonies. Under the Public Protection Act, all the victims' losses could be added together and increase charges and penalties.

The Public Protection Act also creates the specific crime of identity theft. The Attorney General's Office has received over 200 identity theft complaints over the last two years.

Sen. Kent Rogert of Tekamah, who's carrying the legislation said, "This combats the various criminal enterprises currently preying on Nebraskans. Whether it's a fraud ring or an identity theft scam, criminals participating in illegal racketeering activities need to be penalized to the fullest extent. Adding the act to our state statutes would help us do that."

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